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# Wyoming Teacher Attrition

## Non-Monetary Factors and Solutions

10/10/2022



Wyoming  
Education Association

# Quick Introductions of Presenters



- Amanda DeDiego, Associate Professor of Counseling
- Leslie Rush, Professor of Teacher Education
- Mark Perkins, Assistant Professor of Educational Research Methods
- Grady Hutcherson, President of WEA
- Tate Mullen, Government Relations Director, WEA
- Kim Amen, Teacher, Pioneer Park Elementary School



Today's Presentation Will Cover the Following

Overview of the Survey Results

Dr. DeDiego's work with EAPs

Testimony about the findings from Ms.  
Amen and WEA

Recommendations

# Background of the Survey



- There is a national conversation about teacher satisfaction in the United States.
- NEA survey in January: Over 3,000 responses from teachers in the United States.
  - 55% of surveyed teachers are more likely to leave the profession due to staffing, salary, and student support systems than they were just a few years ago.
- We got input from WDE, leaders, and teachers and this led to question of attrition in Wyoming.
  - WDE and several administrators mentioned that some teachers are quitting with little notice.
  - Other stakeholders expressed concerned about unusually high teacher dissatisfaction.



# Steps to Start the Project

- First, we met with WDE to gain a sense of what is going on with teachers.
- Next, we made confidential informal appointments with some principals.
- Third, we met in confidence with a couple of teachers.
- Fourth, we talked to Grady Hutcherson at WEA to discuss ideas and strategies.
- Fifth, we confidentially met with six or so teachers and listened.
  - Informal meetings provided survey content ideas.
  - We finalized items and launched with WEA's help.
  - Notes and themes from teacher/administrator meetings used to generate responses.
  - A review of literature related to the themes and ideas from teachers.
  - We developed initial survey questions and experts checked items (teachers, WYEA, administrators, other educators).
  - We wrote the survey into Qualtrics software.

# Survey Launch Timeline



- We launched around March 3 to WEA's members.
- WEA emailed members and posted the survey link on social media.
- Reminders were sent out periodically.
- Many teachers shared the survey with other teachers generating a snowball effect.
- We received over 700 responses, 70% (497) are 100% complete.
- Many teachers spent over 30 minutes completing the survey.



# Main Research Questions to Answer Long Term

- What is the rate of potential attrition of Wyoming teachers?
- What factors predict potential teacher attrition in Wyoming?
- What might we be able to do to decrease teacher attrition in Wyoming?

## Today's Results Suggest Answers to the Following

- What is the rate at which Wyoming teachers intended to leave teaching at the time of the survey?
- What is the rate at which Wyoming teachers wish they could leave teaching (if they could)?
- What factors relate to Wyoming teachers' desire to leave teaching
- How can factors related to teacher desire to leave their profession be addressed by leaders and policy makers?

# Analysis

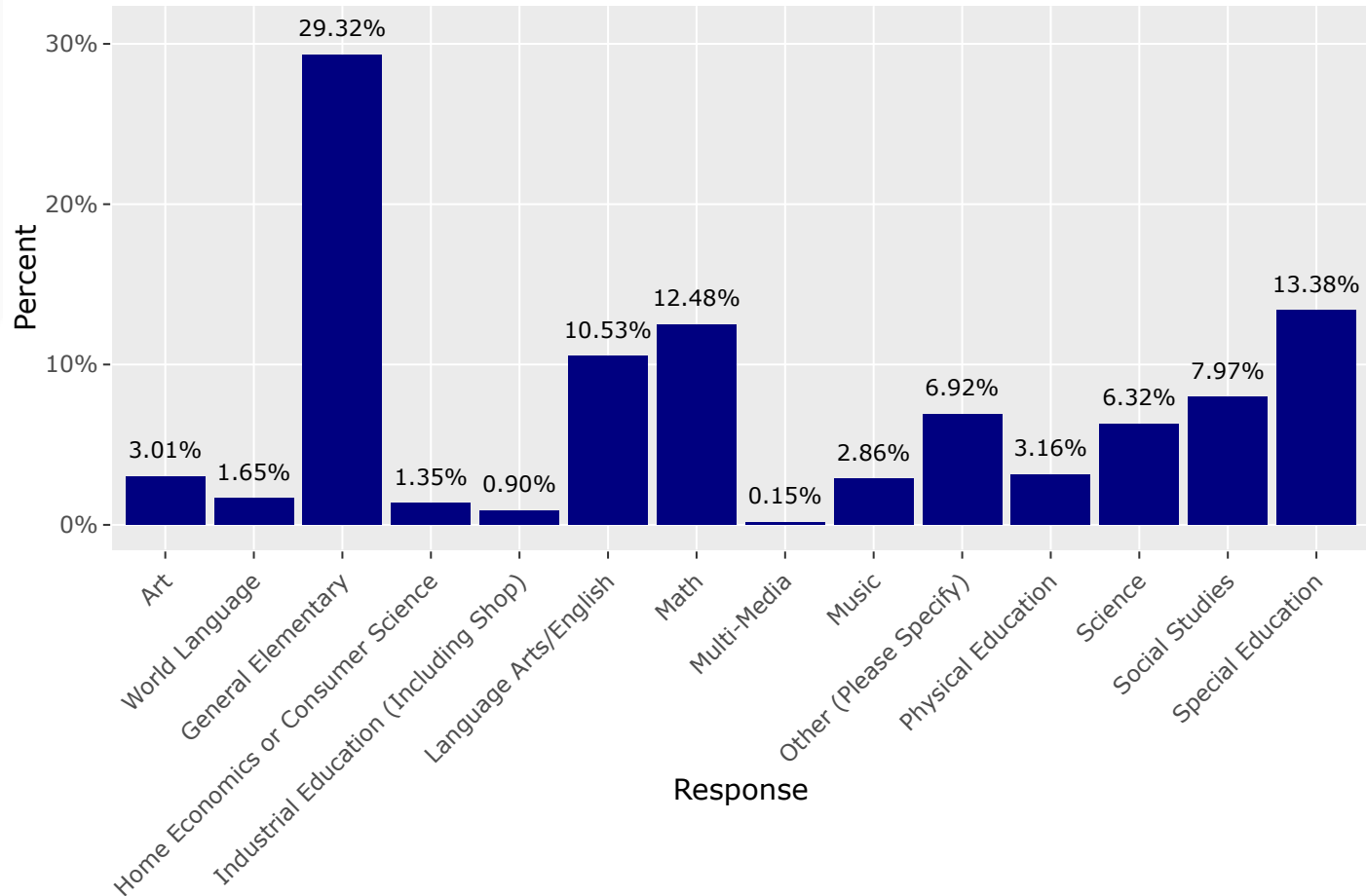


- We ran several statistical tests to examine measurement validity and reliability.
- A Structural Equation Modeling found the following to predict wanting to leave teaching the highest.
  - Mental health
  - Assessment
  - Professional support
- This presentation will also briefly cover COVID's effects on teachers.
- The end of our results will provide a very encouraging finding about teaching in Wyoming.
- We will cover each of the topics with graphs and then with quotes.
- We will then provide recommendations, next steps, and what steps we have taken since the survey.

# General Demographics



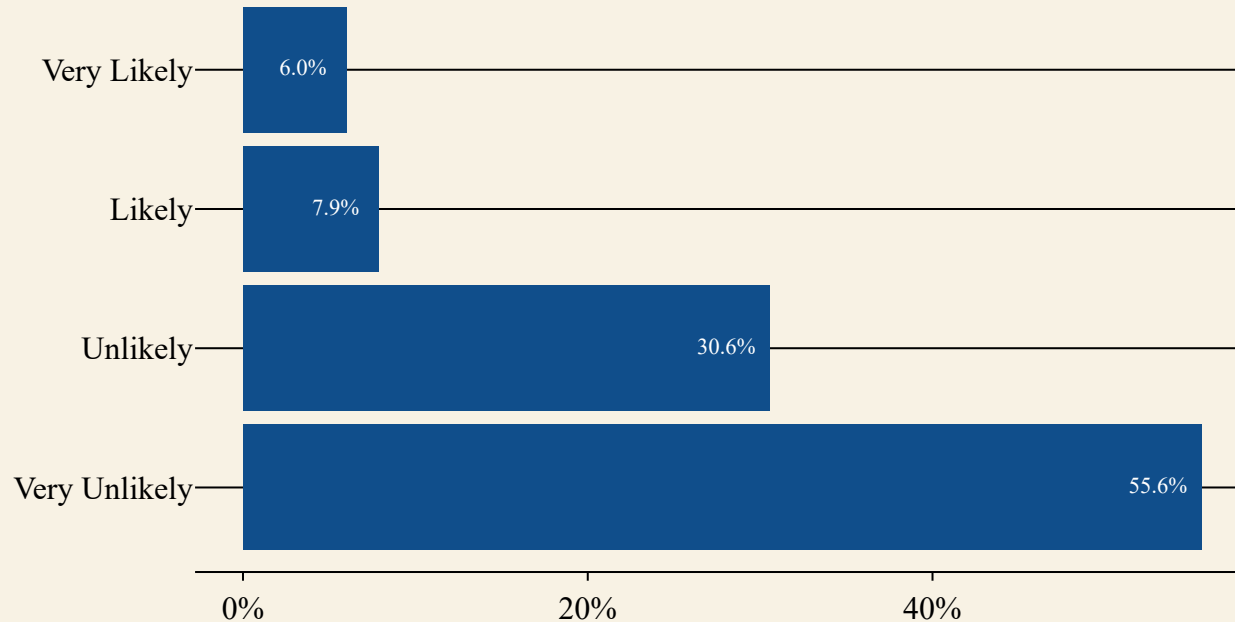
- 665 teachers reported content areas, 75% identified as female.



# Teachers who Intend to Quit



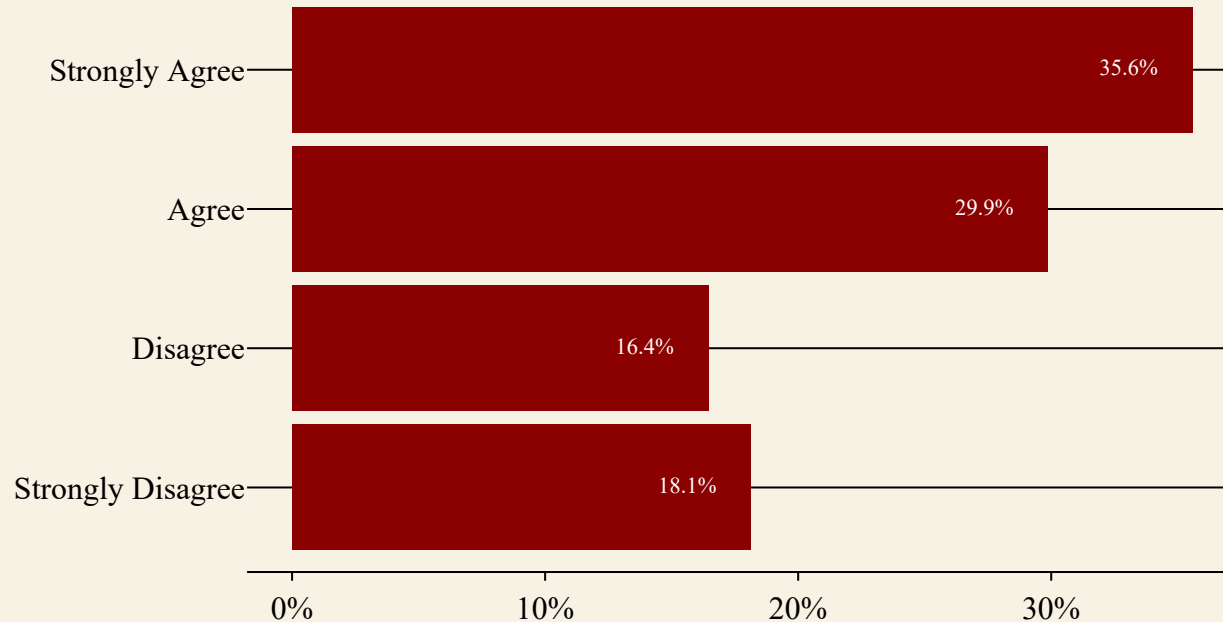
- About 14% are Very Likely or Likely to leave teaching.





## Teachers who Want to Quit

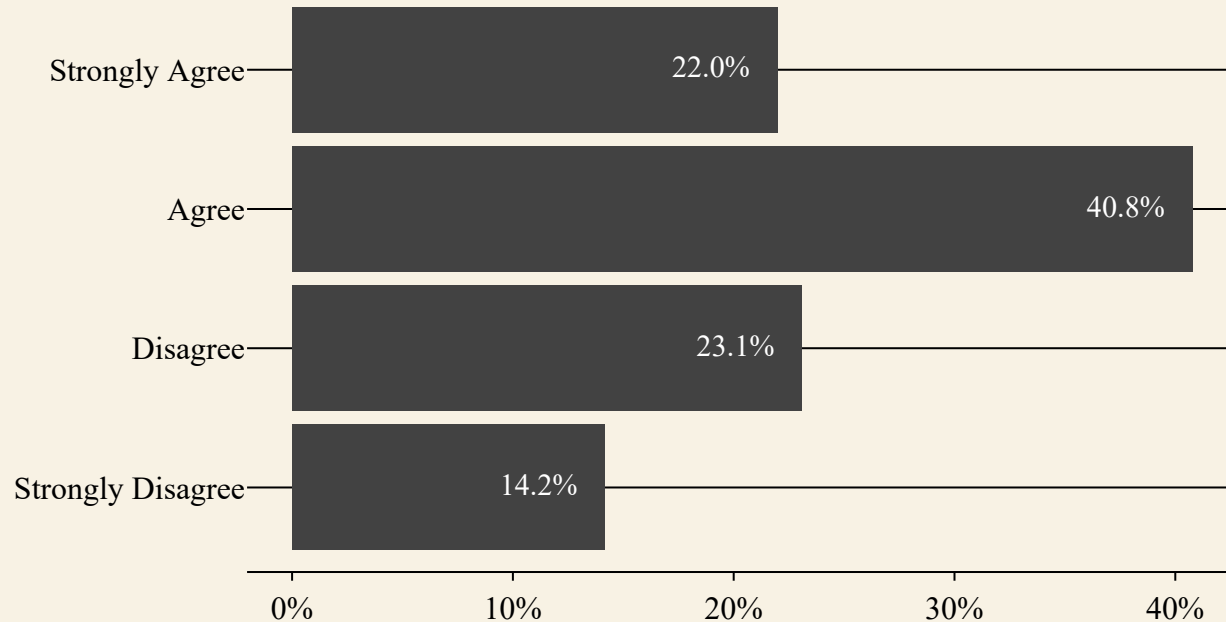
- About 65.5% would quit if not for financial or other reasons.





# Mental Health and Wanting to Leave

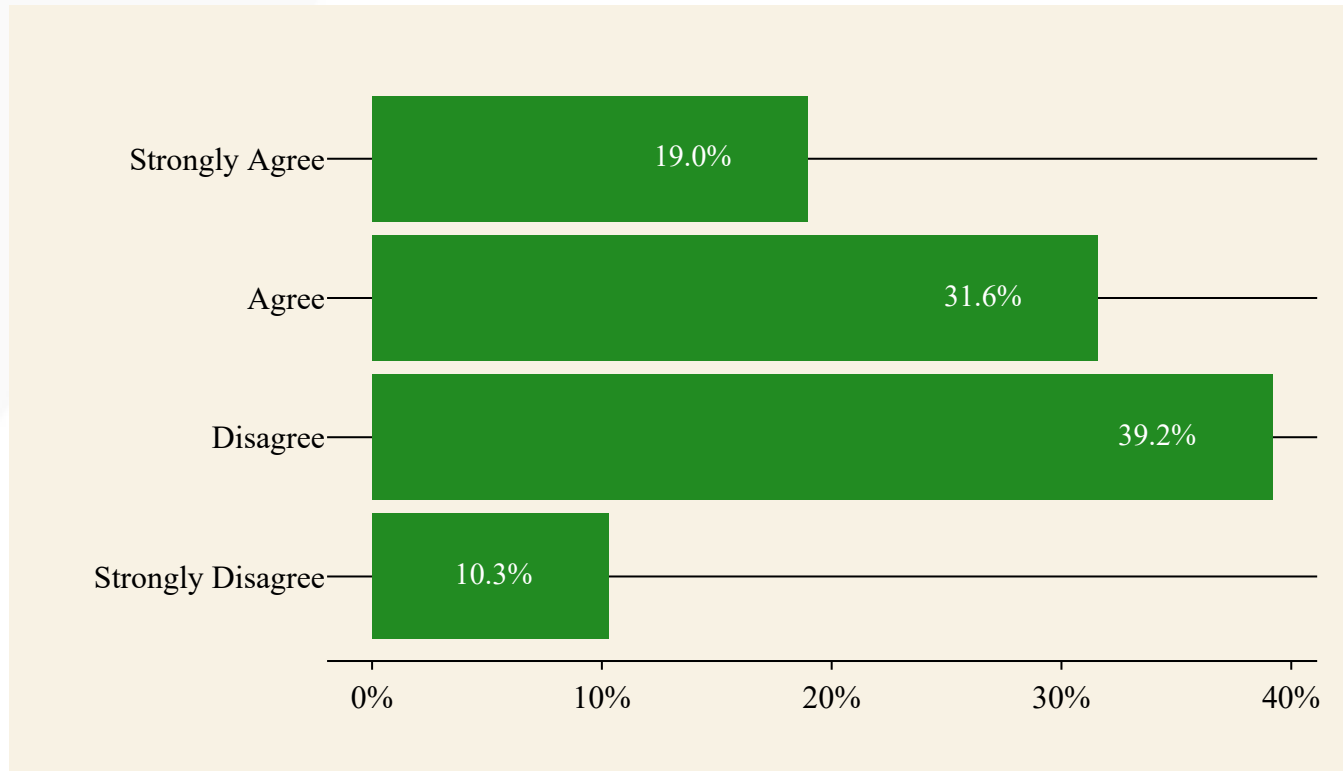
- About 63% of teachers report wanting to leave due to mental health.



# Assessment and Wanting to Quit



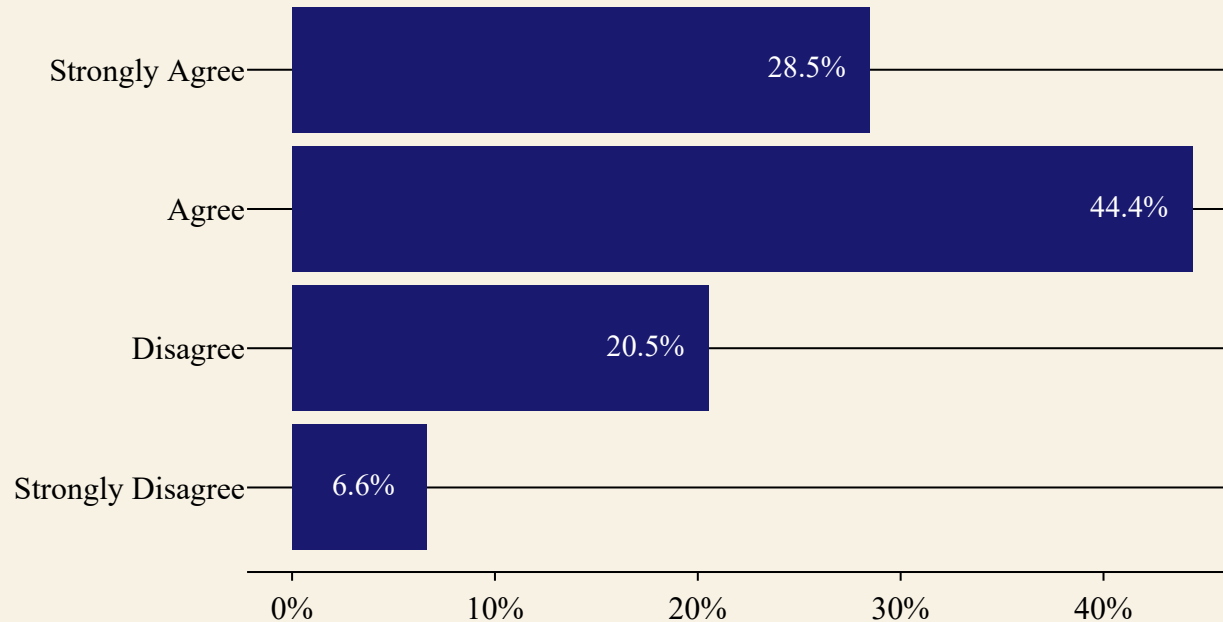
- Over 50% of teachers indicate that assessment makes them want to quit.



# Support and Wanting to Leave



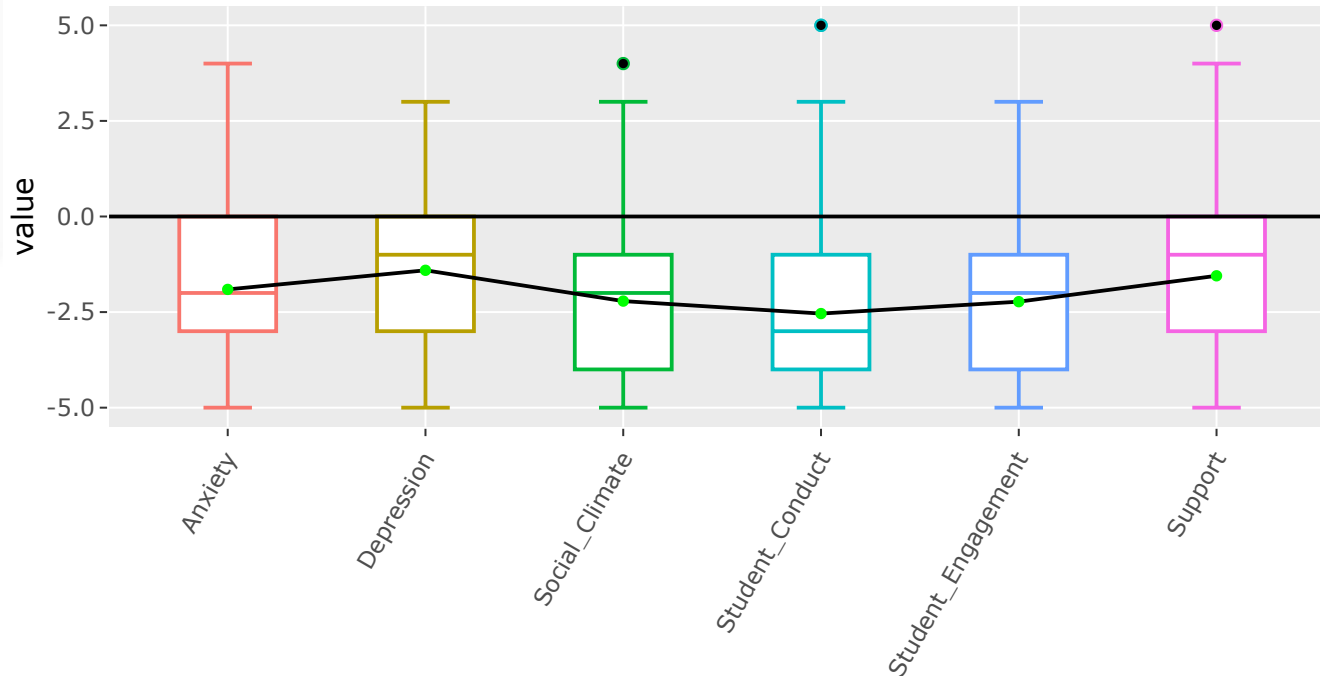
- 73% of respondents report wanting to quit due to they support they get.





# COVID and Decrease in Work Conditions

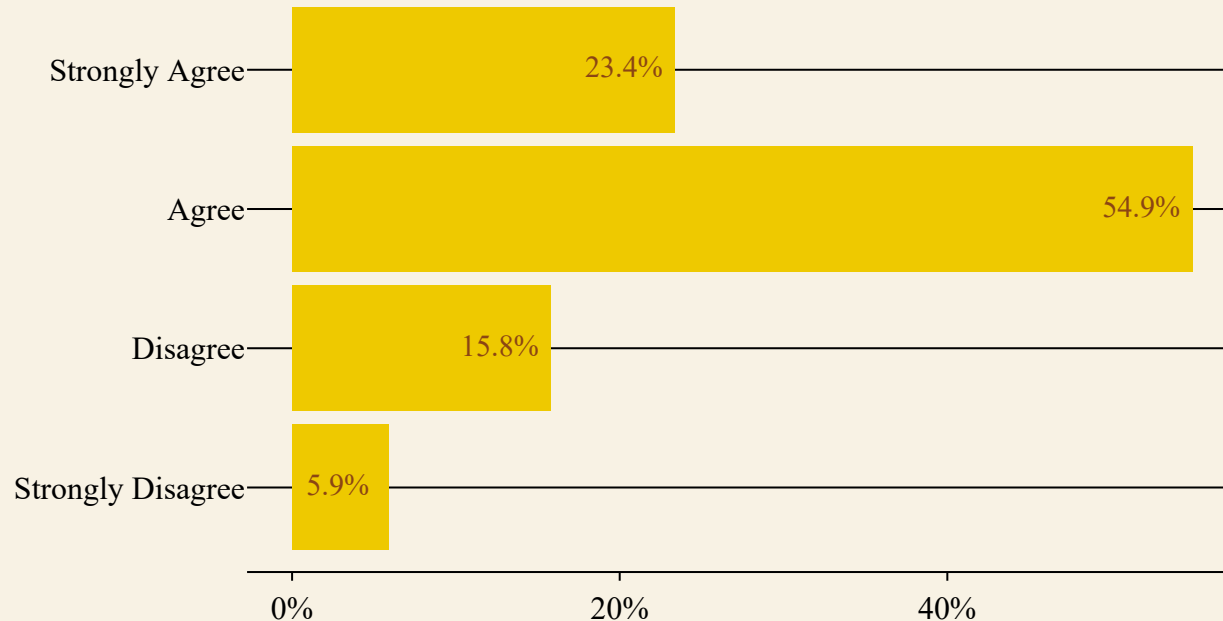
- Unsurprisingly, COVID has decreased teacher experiences across the board.
- Teachers ranked responses to each category between -5 (much worse since COVID) to 5 (much better since COVID)





# Still Wyoming Proud

- Despite the challenges, 78% of teachers report that they are proud to be teachers in Wyoming.





## 245 Open-Ended Comments About Mental Health (altered to protect identities)

"There is a toll on my mental health and the toxic environment makes me want to quit teaching."

"I feel unmotivated more days than I feel motivated."

"The stress from this job caused such high anxiety I needed medical attention."

We recieved 172 Assessment Comments



"WY-TOPP judges teachers more than it helps students."

"Too many assessments take away from learning time and do not provide new information."

"We constantly change our assessments. There's no consistent data to see how a child is actually doing."



## We Recieved 214 Comments about Support

"Zero support from administration. Just asked to do more. Parents don't support, check grades, or hold kids accountable."

"We are not treated as professionals even when your students score high."

"We are all sinking in the same vessel, but we don't have time to even support each other."



## COVID was a Frequent Word in the Comments

"COVID changed my approach. I used to work outside normal hours, but now I refuse to do that any more."

"The technology standards and requirements since COVID have been too much. It takes family time away."

"COVID caused so much stress even adults took it out on each other."



## Many Teachers Expressed an Intrinsic Love of Teaching, Wyoming, and their Schools

"I love teaching and my school. I just don't feel supported by leadership and community."

"I love my leadership and my school and Wyoming is awesome."

"I have a great principal and wonderful colleagues."

# Summary of Survey Results



- Most teachers (86%) do not report that they will quit teaching.
- However, 65% do report that they are only staying because they have to due to financial or other reasons.
- Mental health, assessment, and levels of support rise to the top as non-monetary factors related to wanting to quit teaching.
- COVID resulted in an experiential decline in working conditions.
- The majority of surveyed teachers are proud to be teachers in Wyoming, indicating a remaining desire to keep doing it.



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# Dr. DeDiego's Analysis of Wyoming School District Employee Assistance Programs



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# Background of the EAP Study



- Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) have the primary purpose in the P-12 education system to assist employees with problems impacting work performance.
- EAP and wellness supports enable P-12 educators to perform their jobs more effectively and improve working conditions, therefore leading to improved teaching and well-being (Goldberg, 1982).
- Research conducted by the University of Wyoming College of Education assessed EAP and wellness options available to teachers in Wyoming.

# Methods



- Assessed the mental health support resources available in 48 regular public school districts located across 23 counties in Wyoming.
- Researchers searched employee resources, human resources, district policy manuals, and general district website search features.
- Then contacted human resources offices for all school districts to inquire about employee mental health support to capture data not available on the district website.
- Analyzed EAP information for 37 public school districts for a response rate of 77.1%.
- Analyzed each district for EAP options available, the type of EAP provider, if the EAP provider offered telehealth services, other wellness supports or incentives available to teachers, and health insurance payers for each district.

# Results



- 6 EAPs were serviced by corporate entities (e.g. Magellan, BetterHelp).
- 5 EAPs were serviced by locally operated entities.
- 1 district offered both a corporate and local option.
- 9 EAPs offered telehealth options.
- 3 districts were in the process of developing EAPs.
- 25 districts did not have an EAP or did not report one in development.

## Results (Continued)



- 13 districts offered some type of wellness program beyond an EAP.
  - Examples included free fitness classes, incentive plans for preventative care, and wellness-focused professional development.
- Majority of districts (n = 30, 65.22%) use Blue Cross Blue Shield or BCBS third party affiliates Wyoming School Board Association Insurance Trust (WSBAIT) and/or Wyoming Educators' Benefit Trust (WEBT).
- The next most common (n = 15, 32.61%) payer was United Healthcare, with some districts using UHC third party affiliate UMR.

# Barriers



- Even though EAPs improve teacher mental health and wellness, employees may not be aware of such resources due to lack of promotion or may be hesitant to use them because they may be concerned about lack of confidentiality (Norton, 1988).
- Employees may not be comfortable accessing EAP supports due to requirements of reporting to district or school administrators.
- Employees may have concerns about confidentiality in working with mental health providers.
- Teachers may struggle with being overloaded and may not have time to access mental health supports.



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Ms. Amen, Mr. Hutcherson, and Mr. Mullen will  
discuss their experiences with mental health,  
assessment, and support.



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# Recommendations



- Mental Health (These Could Also Benefit All Wyomingites)
  - Mitigate environmental factors that may increase teacher mental health challenges,
  - Expand mental health services and support systems for teachers,
  - Provide EAPs or other services for districts that lack these resources,
  - De-stigmatize seeking mental health support for kids, parents, educators and everyone.
- Assessment
  - Conduct an inventory of all district or state mandated assessment tools and what they measure,
  - Analyse the amount of time that is dedicated to assessment administration and data analysis,
  - Evaluate the ways in which each assessment tool improves teaching,
  - Simplify student assessment by only measuring things once well instead of multiple times,
  - More work is needed to analyze the predictive validity of assessment tools.
  - Use formative assessments and summative assessments appropriately.

# Recommendations (Continued)



- Support
  - Begin to engage in dialog and conversation that supports educators like we support our military, first responders, and other public heroes,
  - Generate systems to address external concerns and pressures about curriculum and other matters,
  - Relieve the extent to which we politicize teaching (on both sides),
  - Provide teachers opportunities to positively interact with each other, their leaders and other professionals,
  - Decrease ineffective staff-developments, meetings, PLCs, and other similar activities to help teachers recharge.
- General
  - Remember, though these are non-monetary, there is a relationship between these recommendations and financial resources.
  - We all need to remember that everyone cares about kids and wants the education system to work!
  - We all need to realize that teachers are proud to teach in Wyoming.
  - Compassion, empathy, and compromise are the golden keys to helping kids, families, teachers, schools, and communities.



## Other Current Projects and Future Projects Addressing This

- The Wyoming Teacher Mentor Corps is designed to decrease teacher attrition and help teachers with things like work/life balance.
- Drs. Amanda DeDiego, Leslie Rush, Tiffany Hunt, and Barbara Hickman are all working on examining the mental health responses.
- Dr. DeDiego and graduate students continue to examine mental health resources.
- Dr. Hickman and I will be conducting interviews and focus groups with school principals and other educational leaders in the state.
- We have had interest from paraprofessionals, administrative assistants, and other professionals to conduct research in their areas.
- We will be refining the survey (with retainment of many questions) and hope to relaunch in Spring.

# Thank You!



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